

**[Mr. William Kraus]**

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

AUG 8 1939

Name of worker Howard M. Corning Date May 24, 1939.

Address Project headquarters, Elks Building, Portland

Subject Life and Folkways of the Old Aurora Colony

Name and address of informant Mr. William Kraus

Aurora, Oregon

Date and time of interview May 9 & 12, in the afternoon of each day.

Place of interview Front porch and side-yard of his home place

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Mr. Robert J. Hendricks, Oregon Statesman, Salem, Oregon.

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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First visit, alone; second visit, with Mr. Manly M. Banister.

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A small red-brown bungalow built probably twenty years ago on the site of the old Kraus pioneer house, burned down. The house, which stands in the edge of a cherry orchard, with several barns and a wood lot behind it, faces toward the north and the roadway. Between the two a wide ravine gullies the property; the visitor entering by the front gate reaches the house by crossing a badly weathered boardwalk bridge, none too secure. A very gorgeous pink English hawthorne tree was in bloom in the side yard when this interview was made. The property is situated about a half-mile west of the business center of Aurora, in rolling farmlands.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Howard M. Corning Date May 15, 1939

Address Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Life and Folkways of the Old Aurora Colony.

Name and address of informant William Kraus, Aurora-Donald Road, Aurora, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

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1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview

1. Father, Michael Kraus.
2. Missouri, 1853.
3. Three married children.
4. Missouri until 1865; Aurora until 1878; Prineville until 1882; Aurora since then.
5. Bethel, Missouri, and Aurora colony schools.
6. Farming, entire life.
7. Formerly played French horn in old Aurora Band.

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8. Public spirited; no longer religious, as formerly.

9. Has every typical old German characteristic, white-haired and kindly of eye. Converses in very good English with few German idioms. Walks slowly and is slightly stooped; about five feet seven inches in height.

10. Thinks well of his forebears but is not particularly laudatory of the "old times." He speaks with a slight German brogue.

2

Our biggest occasions, while Keil was living, was celebrating his birthday and the Fourth of July. We'd have music and dancing and big picnics at the park. Sometimes we danced at the park and sometimes at a hall down near where the drugstore is now. Keil's birthday was always our biggest time. That was on March 6. We'd have lots of singing.

We had a good music leader. Professor Finck, yes. That's his old place up there on the slope. Can you see the roof there through the trees? It has the original shingles on it yet. It's in pretty bad shape now. You know his son Henry was a great authority on music. He was smart. Yes, I remember him. He went to Harvard.

We had another good music man, Ehlen. My wife was one of his girls. Eli Keil's sister married one of his boys. She lives at Canby —have you seen her? She's older than Eli, she ought to be able to tell you some things you want to know.

No, I don't seem to think of much right now. There used to be plenty of standing water around here in the winters. When we dug the millrace back of my place, that carried some of it off. Then we have tiled a good deal of the land around. When they first started to tile I didn't think it would do any good, but it did. It takes some of the water off just as soon as it falls and if there is any left standing it keeps taking that off; it doesn't stand in the ground

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the way it used to before we had the tile. The Colony had a dam back of my place a ways, you know; that was for the millrace.

In those early years there was a stage route through town. They had a station here. They had a station every twelve miles; there was one at Salem, at Gervais, here at Aurora, at Oregon City, and then Portland. They changed horses at each place. The stage made the run from Portland to Salem in a day and always stopped here at noon. People, as well as the stage drivers, liked to eat here. That was all changed when the railroad came through.

3

No, the mail route didn't go through the lower part of town. It went over the hill there back of Finck's place, a little to the northwest. We walked up there for our mail.

The religious life of everyone here was in the hands of Dr. Keil. He directed it. When he died it died. Yes, we've always been Republicans hereabouts. No, there was no distillery; we didn't make liquor.

You see, I came here after the colony was pretty well established. Then as I say, I went to Prineville in 1878 and when I come back everything was changed, the colony life was gone. So I don't remember much about it. You ought to talk to Mrs. Beck, over in town; she knows. (Note. Mrs. Book had already been questioned, but claimed that her memory was failing her so badly that she scarcely remembered any more. She refused to talk.)

The old buildings over town? There's the old newspaper office, and the house across from Arthur Keil's store. You have pictures of those? Well, let's see. Oh, that big building on the east side? No, that wasn't a store. (Chuckle) That was Keil's old ox barn. The Hurst's have a trucking service there; they fixed one end of it up for a residence.

Well, if you come back I may be able to think of something else, I don't know what.

SECOND INTERVIEW, May 12.

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I don't remember any German medicines that we used. The Doctor (Keil, undoubtedly) used a little machine; he put in on the arm here (forearm); it pricked the skin. It was used for most everything - smallpox, different things. Oh, I don't know what it was called. I don't think it had an American name, the German name was "schropfe" machine. I don't know that it drew the blood, but they used it a lot.

4

Yes, there were some shops in the old colony. There was basket weaving. My wife's father Henry Ehlen handled all that. He did lots of weaving. They wove with oak splints. I can show you a bushel basket he made. We use it for a kindling basket, we've used it for fifty years. Wait, I'll close the door. You go on around. I'll show it to you.

See it there in the woodshed? They don't make them that good any more. About 15 years ago a fellow came through selling some he had made. We bought three of them. But they are all worn out now. This one is still good. Ehlen made all sorts of baskets.

Yes, the colony made their own clothes and furniture, and I guess they had a glove factory.

You're right, the earliest school was held in a little building up in the colony park. But that was a private school, mostly for the Keil children. The public school was built later. I went to the public school.

No, I don't remember just when rural delivery came; later than in the eastern parts, I know. After 1900.

I don't recall hearing Eli Keil tell that story (see Eli Keil interview for incident of German and Irishman at time of building of railroad). But I know old Halladay used Chinese workers when he first started grading for the tracks. You can see the grade he started at the back of my place, only 300 or 400 feet from here, in those trees. It was too low and below high water. He had to begin all over, building higher up. Later there were some other

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nationalities worked, but I don't know what ones. Well, I remember there was an accident to a work train just north of town once. The cars were spilled over into the ditch and some of the crew were killed. Maybe they were Greek, I don't know; the way they talked was all Greek to me.

Yes, in those days we all worked the roads. All the able-bodied men.

5

If you were under 50 years you had to work two days each year. Then there was a pole tax of \$1 for each man, I think. Besides that you were taxed \$1 for each \$1000 of property assessment.

Wish I could tell you more about the colony. It's no secret with me.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Howard M. Corning Date May 24, 1939

Address Project Headquarters, Elks Building, Portland

Subject Life and Folkways of the Old Aurora Colony.

Name and address of informant

Text: FIRST INTERVIEW, May 9.

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If you would ask me a few questions— just what it is you want to know - maybe I can tell you some things. Early customs? Well, I remember as a boy we youngsters used to ride horses for pea threshing. The peas were thrown on the ground and the horses tramped the peas out with their hoofs. One fellow threshed on his barn floor but mostly it was out on the open ground. No, I don't remember what kind of peas they were. But we boys enjoyed it.

Yes, my parents were members of the Aurora Colony, but I was born back in Missouri. My folks came to Oregon in 1865, so you see they came later than the first colony members. I attended the colony school. I remember we had an old professor. But he made a mistake in his teaching. He taught German all morning and English all afternoon. German was all right to talk to our own people but everybody around us was talking English. That didn't give us a right chance.

When I got older I joined the Aurora band. You know we had a fine band, fine music here. I played a cornet. I don't know what became of it, I went to Prineville in 1878, just after Dr. Keil died, and when I came back in 1882 the band had broken up and things were badly scattered. I don't know who got my horn.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

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OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Howard M. Corning Date May 24, 1939



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Address Project Headquarters, Elks Building, Portland Subject Life and Folkways of the Old Aurora Colony

Name and address of informant Mr. William Kraus

Aurora, Oregon.

Comment:

The informant is the oldest living member of the old Aurora Colony, a full and detailed history of which is to be read in the book "Bethel and Aurora," by Robert J. Hendricks. Growing into manhood in the latter days of the colony's existence, Mr. Kraus grew out of interest with colony life at the time of the death of its founder and leader. Moving away for a time, he came back to Aurora after the colony, as a communal enterprise, had been discontinued. His viewpoints, therefore, seem unbiased and objective; he is a realist, not a romantic. At 33, he is genial. Life has not ill-used him.